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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED.

BY CHARLES KLEIN, CHARLES JOHNSTON AND OLIVIA HOWARD
DUNBAR.

“MARK TWAIN AND CHRISTIAN SCIENCE.”*

I.

It is impossible to read Mark Twain's book on “Christian Science” without coming to the conclusion that not only Christian Science but every other religious belief appeals to his sense of humor—and to his sense of humor only, and this gives rise to the question (in my mind at least) as to whether the comic point of view is a valuable or even a reliable point of view in the consideration of religious topics.

The first part of Mr. Twain's book is devoted to the *Reductio ad absurdum* method of dealing with the subject—a prolific field for the humorist to work in, but scarcely a profitable one for the seeker after Truth, or even the investigator who is anxious to know something about the matter. Indeed if it were not for the unjust and unfounded statements against Mrs. Eddy, seriously made by Mr. Twain, in the latter part of his work, it would be impossible to take the book seriously. For example, does Mr. Twain really wish his readers to infer that the Christian Science prayer contains such expressions as “Ante and pass the buck,” “All down but nine,” “Set 'em up in another alley,” or is his object merely to infuse poker and bowling-alley atmosphere into a religious subject? It would have been far easier for Mr. Twain's readers if he had given them a key to his book explaining what he wished them to take seriously and what he wished them merely to laugh at; it would have been far easier for them if he had explained what he intended them to regard as truth and what he intended

* “Christian Science.” By Mark Twain. New York and London: Harper & Brothers.

them to regard as pure fiction. As the book stands it is a combination of truth and fiction which is most misleading, for one doesn't know which Mr. Twain intends to be which; it is a mixture of not too skilfully blended sense and nonsense, and while it is not funny enough to appeal to one's sense of humor it fails equally to convince in its serious moments. As the matter stands, so carefully has Mr. Twain hidden his meaning that, after reading the book, I honestly don't know whether he regards Christian Science as the greatest blessing or the greatest evil the world has ever known.

It is Mr. Twain himself who has set a value on his work; he says (page 43): "Upon a great religious or political question the opinion of the dullest head in the world is worth the same as the opinion of the brightest head—a brass farthing." Then why? But that's not the question—Mr. Twain's opinion is here. Is it worth even the price at which he quotes it? I think not, for from beginning to end Mr. Twain misunderstands where he does not misstate the beliefs of Christian Scientists. For instance, when a Christian Scientist says there are no such things as pain and sickness, the Scientist means that pain and sickness are beliefs, that they are relative and not permanent realities, and that they can be destroyed, he (the Christian Scientist) does not deny their relative, but their absolute, existence. There is a difference between relative and absolute Truth (Mr. Twain doubtless knows this) as in its philosophic sense, Eternity destroys the idea of Time. So does the Idea of Good destroy the Idea of Evil.

Mr. Twain says (page 38) that he is being sued for payment for Christian Science treatment. Is this misstatement deliberate or accidental? A Christian Scientist would not use legal means to obtain payment for his services, and the person who did could not continue to be a Christian Scientist, in fact, would automatically cease to be one. But perhaps this is Mr. Twain's humorous way of suggesting a possibility.

But what are we to believe in the face of the following? "For of all the strange and frantic and incomprehensible and uninterpretable books," says Mr. Twain (page 29) "which the imagination of man has created, surely this one" ("Science and Health," Mrs. Eddy's book) "is the prize sample."

Now this is perfectly clear: Mr. Twain declares that "Science and Health" is "incomprehensible and uninterpretable"—so far

his attitude is plain. What then are we to understand by this?

"Let the reader turn," says Mr. Twain (page 267), "to the excerpt I have made from the chapter on Prayer (last year's edition of 'Science and Health') and compare that *wise* and *sane* and *elevated* and *lucid* piece of work with the aforesaid Preface," etc., etc.

Now may I ask Mr. Twain just what he means by calling Mrs. Eddy's work, "Science and Health," "strange and frantic and incomprehensible and uninterpretable" on page 29, and on page 267, when criticising parts of the same work, he calls it "wise and sane and elevated and lucid"?

Can anything be more "strange, frantic, incomprehensible and uninterpretable" than this? Again:

"I feel sure," says Mr. Twain (page 30), "that none but the membership (meaning Christian Scientists) can understand it ('Science and Health'). It is only the martial tooting of the trombone and merely stirs the soul through the noise, but does not convey a meaning."

Indeed! What then does Mr. Twain mean by the following:

"If she (Mrs. Eddy) borrowed the Great Idea (in 'Science and Health') did she carry it away in her head or in manuscript? Did she hit on the Great Idea herself? By the Great Idea I mean, of course, the conviction that the healing force involved was still existent and could be applied now, just as it was applied by Christ's Disciples." Further (page 283), "And I think that *the Great Idea*," (the italics are mine) "*Great* as it was would have enjoyed but a brief activity and would have then gone to sleep for some more centuries but for the perpetuating impulse it got from that organized and tremendous force" (the Christian Science movement).

Now in the name of common sense, how can Mr. Twain make such obviously contradictory statements and expect the public to take them seriously? "No one can understand it." "It is only the martial tooting of a trombone." It "does not convey a meaning." What about the Great Idea, Mr. Twain? "The Great Idea" that received "the perpetuating impulse it got from that organized and tremendous force"? So it has a meaning and a very great one it seems: great enough to be worth stealing, for later on in his book he accuses Mrs. Eddy of stealing it!

He then goes on to say (page 292) that "she has restored to the world neglected and abandoned features of the Christian religion (physical healing) which her thousands of followers find gracious, and blessed, and contenting." "But," he says on page 268 "there is a mightier benefaction than the healing of the body, and that is the healing of the spirit, which is Christian Science's other claim. So far as I know," continues Mr. Twain, "so far as I can find out, it makes it good. Personally I have not known a Scientist who did not seem serene, contented, unharassed."

And all this, mark you, through the study of the works of one who is "untruthful"—is this reasonable? But let Mr. Twain continue: "If time shall prove that the Science can heal the persecuted spirit of man,"—and Mr. Twain has stated on page 268 that so far as he can find out *it has been proven*—"why then Mrs. Eddy will have a monument that will reach above the clouds." Christian Scientists believe that "she has delivered to them a religion which has revolutionized their lives, banished the glooms that shadowed them, and filled them and flooded them with sunshine and gladness and peace." But they are "prejudiced" witnesses!

"Is it insanity," asks Mr. Twain (page 49), "to believe that Christian Scientism is destined to make the most formidable show that any new religion has made in the world since the birth and spread of Mohammedanism?" "It has a better chance to grow and prosper and achieve permanency than any other existing *ism*, for it has more to offer than any other." "And who are attracted by Christian Science? There is no limit. It appeals to the rich, the poor, the high, the low, the *cultured*, the ignorant, the *gifted*, the stupid, the modest, the *wise*, the silly, etc.," (the italics are mine) "they who are ailing in body and mind, they who have friends who are ailing in body and mind. To mass it in a phrase, its clientage is the Human Race. Will it march? I think so. Remember its principal great offer—to rid the race of pain and disease. Can it do so? In large measure, Yes—."

All these benefits, all these blessings, all this spiritual uplifting, this freedom from sorrow and suffering, Mr. Twain allows will come from Christian Science, the acknowledged founder and discoverer of which he accuses of dishonesty. Mr. Twain, do you really believe it yourself?

In his concluding chapter Mr. Twain expresses himself as believing that in Christian Science there is a "field for great and distinguished usefulness," that among other things it should make voters honest, that it should try and make Congress honest, in other words, that it should make the world honest,—a splendid idea of Mr. Twain's. And yet with almost incredible inconsistency he accuses Mrs. Mary Baker G. Eddy, the founder and discoverer of Christian Science, the author of its Text-Book "Science and Health, with key to the Scriptures"—the science that he suggests should make the world honest—of wilful and deliberate dishonesty herself! The evil tree can produce good fruits, a dishonest cause can produce an honest effect—is this common logic?

Mr. Twain says that Mrs. Eddy is illiterate, shallow, incapable of reasoning, yet he declares (page 49) that Christian Science attracts among others "cultured, gifted and wise people," and that eventually Christian Science will dominate the world. Whence this power if its founder and discoverer is dishonest, illiterate, shallow and incapable of reasoning? Does Mr. Twain believe that evil has more power than good? Will he accuse the Christian Science leader of being a force for evil, while he admits that Christian Science itself is a force for good? Isn't character, force, and does Mr. Twain think that Christian Scientists are mistaken in Mrs. Eddy's character? I suspect that he has listened largely to Mrs. Eddy's enemies; but there are hundreds of thousands—and if Mr. Twain's prophecy is to come true (and I believe it will) there will soon be millions of Christian Scientists who will testify that Mrs. Eddy is exactly what he himself says she is to her followers (page 285)—"Patient, gentle, loving, compassionate, noble-hearted, and unselfish." Does Mr. Twain believe that Christian Scientists are so thoroughly in the dark as to Mrs. Eddy's real character? Does he believe that daily contact with her students and an intimate acquaintance with her life's purposes, objects, pursuits and works, an understanding of her motives, could fail to have enlightened them as to her true character when he himself says: "She has revealed it in her autobiography and the by-laws of the church"? He can read it all so plainly in her books. It is a comfortable position Mr. Twain has assumed; he can read between the lines that which many, many thousands of Christian Scientists are unable to decipher;

and yet among these thousands are included judges, lawyers, clergymen, doctors, university professors, authors, United States Senators, congressmen—every profession, trade and religious denomination in the world being represented. I confess I gasp in admiration at Mr. Twain's intuition—I must read that autobiography and those by-laws again.

Some years ago these attacks on Christian Science were confined to the Science alone. Now that it is generally conceded that Christian Science has established its claims, the point of attack is Mrs. Eddy herself. "Science and Health" is such a wonderful book, say its critics, that Mrs. Eddy couldn't have written it. Mr. Quimby or Mr. Somebody else must have written it—perhaps the proof-readers wrote it—anybody but Mrs. Eddy. Still the fact remains that it is written and is doing marvellous work. It is not my purpose in this paper to prove that Mrs. Eddy wrote "Science and Health"—the proof is overwhelming to those who really want the truth—but to point out that since the beginning of time this queer old world has always been ungrateful (if not maliciously cruel) to those who have done it the most good, and I should like to ask Mr. Twain and a few others on the board of strategy who are planning this concerted attack on Mrs. Eddy if it is because her work is lifting sinning and suffering humanity to a higher plane of existence that they (the aforesaid bureau) are trying to put her in the public pillory?

CHARLES KLEIN.

II

THE pleasantest thing in the book is the picture of dear old Mark at the beginning. Next come certain paragraphs. One is about a child who fell from a pony, and "demonstrated" over a swollen eye, which presently began to open. Mark Twain comments: "Why, dear, it would have opened an oyster. I think it is one of the touchingest things in child-history, that pious little rat down cellar pumping away at the Scientific Statement of Being." One of the chapters in Mrs. Eddy's "Autobiography" is headed: "Marriage and Parentage." On this Mark Twain writes: "You imagine that she is going to begin a talk about her marriage and finish with some account of her father and mother. And so you will be deceived. 'Marriage' was right, but 'Parentage' was not the best word for the rest of the record. It refers to the birth of her own child. After a certain period of

time 'my babe was born.' Marriage and Motherhood—Marriage and Maternity—Marriage and Product—Marriage and Dividend—either of these would have fitted the facts and made the matter clear." Again, on the sentence: "His spiritual noumenon and phenomenon silenced portraiture," he writes: "I realize that noumenon is a daisy; and I will not deny that I shall use it whenever I am in a company which I think I can embarrass with it; but, at the same time, I think it is out of place among friends in an autobiography. . . . You cannot silence portraiture with a noumenon; if portraiture should make a noise, a way could be found to silence it, but even then it could not be done with a noumenon. Not even with a brick, some authorities think." Then there is a note on Mrs. Eddy's eloquence: "She usually throws off an easy remark all sodden with Greek or Hebrew or Latin learning; she usually has a person watching for a star—she can seldom get away from that poetic idea—sometimes it is a Chaldee, sometimes a Walking Delegate, sometimes an entire stranger. . . ." But I think the finest is this: "Thus it is plain that she did not plead that the Deity was the (verbal) Author; for if she had done that, she would have lost her cause—and with rude promptness. It was in the old days before the Berne Convention and before the passage of our amended law of 1891, and the court would have quoted the following stern clause from the existing statute and frowned her out of the place: 'No Foreigner can acquire copyright in the United States.'"

But Mark Twain will never forgive me, if I do not make it clear that his book is much more than a garland of humor. In reality it is much more. It is a sober, dispassionate and very earnest study of a remarkable system, the achievement of a very gifted woman. Mark Twain shows us two sides of Mrs. Eddy's character, the brighter and the darker. He gives us a view of her enthusiastic self-reliance, her psychic gifts, her wonderful personal magnetism, her fine power of organization, her keenness and alert, practical sense. He also shows us the cloud of which this is the lining: the boundless vanity, the despotism, the cold calculating mind, the sordid pursuit of money, after a certain point in her life, and the thirst for fame and admiration at a later time. As the better side of Mrs. Eddy has had ample justice, and something more than justice done to it, by her disciples, and notably by herself, it is natural and right that

Mark Twain should lay far more stress on the sordid despotism, the vanity, the pretence, which he makes exceedingly plain in his earnest and disinterested study. He is absolutely right in underlining the passion for money, backed up by claims of immediate divine guidance, as when Mrs. Eddy declares, in her Autobiography, that the Deity impressed her to charge \$300 for a course of twelve, and later seven, lessons in healing. He is right when he points out the exorbitant prices demanded for Mrs. Eddy's books, in their hundreds of editions. And above all, he is right when he shows, with remorseless consistency, that the cult, of which Mrs. Eddy is the head, is a mental despotism, which deprives its devotees of the right and power of individual judgment, and to a large extent of individual responsibility and initiative, in all that concerns the cult and its organization. Mental despotism, anything which weakens or destroys individual discrimination, personal responsibility, is an evil, in whatever form, or under whatever pretext it appears in human life. And we cannot too often be warned against this great danger.

The impression one gets of Mrs. Eddy, by studying both sides of the question, is this. She is evidently a rarely gifted nature, a very unusual union of two qualities. On the one hand, she is a psychic, with all that this implies. She has visions of a world finer than the material earth; and, so far as they go, her visions are real. She does penetrate into regions sealed to the bodily eyes. She does perceive realms of finer forces, skies with wider horizons. And she has in a marked degree another characteristic of nearly all psychics. She tries to give expression to her thought in terms of her visions, in imagery, in parables, in metaphors. As her vision, though wide, perhaps, is not very lofty, she does not often find the real principle which links image to image; and so she strings them together in a haphazard way, mixing metaphors, confusing terms, multiplying symbols, in wildest confusion. Of these mixed metaphors Mark Twain has made a fine collection. They show that her culture is defective, if you will; but they show a great deal more. They bear all the hall-marks of the psychic temperament, and give us an insight into the world of tumbling images into which her consciousness has found its way. There is a second characteristic of the psychic temperament, and one that is a constant and formidable danger. It is vanity, the desire to put one's self forward, boastfulness, the craving for

notoriety and domination. If the psychic has the strength to rise above the psychic plane, and enter the real spiritual world, this evil tendency may be conquered and kept under foot. If not, then the expansion of psychic consciousness inflames vanity and egotism, and gives them an inordinate growth, such as we have seen a thousand times in the history of the world's thought.

Add to the psychic temperament, with its genuine gifts and its genuine dangers, a keen Yankee faculty for organization, and we have the outline of Mrs. Eddy's character, the seed of the plant whose overgrowths Mark Twain has pictured for us in his book. I do not at all share his apprehension that we are threatened with a future Christian Science Papacy. The heart of mankind is too sane for that. We may, indeed, grow enthusiastic over half-truths, but we shall never rest permanently content with half-truths. There will come the breaking of the shell, the new birth into a sounder and wider world.

For I think the essence of the matter is, that Christian Science is a half-truth. It is the truth, but it is not the whole truth. All mankind has, throughout the long ages, cherished the intuition of the Great Awakening into the finer life, which shall answer to our hopes and aspirations. All literature, the records of all Seers and Sages, are full of that vision and that hope. We find it in the most ancient Upanishads: "When all desires that were hid in the heart are let go, the mortal becomes immortal, and enters the Eternal. And like as the slough of a snake lies lifeless, cast forth upon an ant-hill, so lies his body, when the Spirit of man rises up bodiless and immortal, as the Life, as the Radiance, as the Eternal." We find it in Shelley's "Adonais":

"He hath awakened from the dream of life. . . ."

And we find it in every true scripture, every true poem, between.

But we find also, in all scriptures, the indispensable condition of entrance: "He that hateth not his life shall lose it. He that hateth his life, shall keep it unto life eternal." Or, as Carlyle magnificently says: "*Es leuchtet mir ein!* The self in thee needs to be annihilated!"

There is a mirage in the psychic world, an inverted image of the divine spiritual realm above it. And this image can be reached without the great sacrifice. It promises, not self-sacrifice, but self-satisfaction, not humility, but vanity, not renunciation, but

"health, happiness, success in all legitimate enterprises." And for a time it keeps these promises, just as Dutch courage lasts a certain time, and enables one to face bodily dangers. But the psychic world is also an intoxicant, a stimulant, and like all stimulants, radically unwholesome.

And mankind is at heart wholesome and sane, not to be satisfied with stimulants, not to be fed with half-truths. He will throw away this husk, and demand the true bread of life. Demanding, he will be confronted with the immemorial condition: "The self in thee needs to be annihilated!" And if he fulfils the condition, then he may enter, and with joy realize what a burden selfishness has been, blinding him to the world of his immortality.

I do not, therefore, apprehend terrible things from this new psychic evangel. It is but the effervescence of a genuine power, the flush of false dawn, to be followed by real light.

CHARLES JOHNSTON.

"THE FAR HORIZON."*

It is more than a little puzzling that a writer of Lucas Malet's experience and skill should have produced a novel bearing so many dreary resemblances to a "first book." It is as if Mrs. Harrison had absent-mindedly believed herself to be under the necessity of writing without realizing that she had nothing to write about; and had therefore languidly gathered up a handful of stock characters, loosely related them, and depended upon the expression of an acute religious bias to give life to the result. Her Spanish-Irish hero is like the ignorantly sentimental conception of a young girl; and it is astonishing that the author of "Sir Richard Calmady," which is vigorously imagined, whatever its faults of taste, should have chosen for the ostensible theme of her book so banal an idea as that expressed in the title. Dominic Iglesias is very far from unique in his contemplation of a "far horizon"; that is understood to be the novel-hero's exalted function.

Mrs. Harrison has followed the traditional method of elaborately accounting for her hero before presenting him, and her highly colored explanation makes the part that she later gives Iglesias to play seem peculiarly uninspiring. It might also be

* "The Far Horizon." By Lucas Malet. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.